

Philosophy 132  
Philosophy of Mind  
Handout 8  
Friday, 21 September 2007

1. *Some Questions to address:*

1. What are bodily sensations?
2. What is it for a bodily sensation to have a location?
3. How is bodily sensation related to embodiment?
4. How do sensations relate to perception and to emotion?

We will compare *subjective* and *perceptual* accounts of sensation and question whether there are any alternative approaches.

2. *Preliminaries*

*Some examples of bodily sensation:* Itches, tickles, nausea, headaches, burning sensation, orgasm, warmth, butterflies in your stomach.

*A Distinction – Intransitive versus Transitive Sensation*

Contrast sensations of pain with sensations of warmth.

*How do sensations relate to perception?*

Often we speak of sensations of taste; sensations of smell and sensations of touch. But we don't always talk about sensations of vision (but what about sensations of light).

Some philosophers think that all perception involves sensation. Is the sensation in that case *bodily* sensation? What makes a mental event *sensation*? What makes it *bodily*?

There are two senses in which sensations may be claimed to be internal in contrast to perceptions:

- i.) *Sensations are internal because:* they are within the mind; in contrast perception relates one to the world independent of the mind;
- ii.) *Sensations are internal because:* they present what is within the body; sense perception relates one to the world beyond the limits of one's skin.

(cf. Thomas Reid on touch *An Inquiry into the Human Mind*, Indianapolis: Hackett Ch. 5.)

*Some additional examples of bodily awareness:*

Proprioception – an awareness each has of the position of his or her own limbs and body parts (the term 'proprioception' contrasts with the term 'exteroception' for perception of the world outside of one's skin; but this is a term philosophers rarely use).

Kinaesthesia – an awareness each has of the movement of his or her limbs and body parts

Vestibular sense – the sense of balance and orientation each of has; the sense of which way is 'up'

In each case, one is aware of one's own body in a way that one is aware of no one else's body and no one else can be aware of one's body in this way. (But cf. the possibility of Siamese twins who partly share a body.)

### 3. *Privacy & Subjectivity*

It is often claim that bodily sensations are *private* and *subjective*.

#### *Privacy of sensation*

- a.) Only *you* can know if you are in pain (others can only have reasonable belief) – cf. Mill;
- b.) You have a special authority over whether you are in pain or not; your verdict on whether you are in pain is such that others must defer to you;
- c.) You cannot be mistaken about whether you are in pain
- d.) You are aware of your pains in a way that no one else can be aware of them

Are sensations private in any or all of these senses?

#### *Subjectivity of sensation*

(I) Perspectival conception of subjectivity:

To know what pain is, you have to know what it is like to feel a pain

(II) Metaphysical conception of subjectivity:

- a. Pain exists only if one feels pain
- b. To feel pain is sufficient for there to be pain

Contrast:

One can see a table, but also have an illusion of seeing a table (when one sees something which isn't a table but misperceives as one), or even have an hallucination of a table (when one is aware of nothing at all in the world around us).

If pain is metaphysically subjective, then illusion or hallucination of pain is ruled out; and because of the explanation of that, it makes no sense to suppose there may be unfelt pains.

### 4. *Is Pain Metaphysically Subjective?*

- a.) What of misclassified pains? (Paul Churchland, *Matter & Consciousness*, an example of hazing)
- b.) What of the soldier wounded in battle?
- c.) What of being woken up by a pain in your left shoulder?

What is the connection between privacy and subjectivity?

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